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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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The possibility was minuscule at best, just about unthinkable. You've all heard the bold statement, almost threatening at times. Well, just a few miles off the borders of New England, this past week, it happened: Hell froze over. Yes, that Evil Empire, located in the bowels of New York, froze up solid - the Boston Red Sox came from a 3-game deficit and beat those damn Yankees! It's been almost 20 years since I was a diehard Red Sox fan. Don't get me wrong, I still like the Sox, but those diehard days are long gone. I grew up a Red Sox fan, but also a Yankees fan. Those teams of the late 50's and early/mid 60's were inspirational for kids growing up learning to play baseball. I could say the same for my Cubbies, but they left the scene early this year. The Sox have always found a way to blow it at the most crucial point. They come so far only to let it slip away. They did it last year. They were heading in that same direction, only worse, this year. But they managed to pull off the most incredible comeback in all of baseball history. Beating the Yankees in such a fashion this year was the feat of all time. The World Series will be almost anticlimactic. I watched most of the games just to see the Yankees lose. The richest team in the league, and the lost. Money has spoiled professional sports, so seeing the Yankees lose like they did was doubly rewarding.

So, what does any of this have to do with Atari? Well, technically, nothing at all. But, I haven't had any editorial comments in such a long time, this seemed like as good a time to spout off. But when you come right down to it, I can certainly create an analogy with Atari and the Red Sox. Both had opportunities, but found ways to blow the big games. While the Red Sox kept coming back year after year to try and win the big one, Atari didn't have the staying power, or the willingness to make it to the top. Both had their rivals - Atari had Amiga and IBM; the Red Sox had the Yankees. Atari had the diehard fans, but Atari gave up. Their fans have dwindled, but we're still out there. The Red Sox have their diehards, and the team kept coming back - finally giving their fans something to cheer about. Only one more road to take for everything. I guess we'll never know whether or not Atari could have been something great, but it was fun while it lasted. Go Red Sox!

Until next time...

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New Version of Icon Extract (1.50)

Florent Lafabrie has announced:

New version after a large work (1 year) of research of bugs and insertion of innovations. The treatment can be 70% faster with Magic PC and faster 50% with the CT60. The program is free, but it is necessary to ask me for a code of activation. For those which do not know it yet, Icon Extract extracts the icons colors (from 1 to 32 bits) from files ICO, CUR, ANI, ICL, DLL and XPM to safeguard them with format RSC (for Interface or Resource Master).

Minimum: TT or Falcon + accelerating card or PC with Magic PC. The program is developed on Falcon 030 + CT60 100 MHz + 256 Mo of SDRAM

The program and the list of the innovations are in French. Afflicted, but I do not have enough time for all to translate. Good loading,

Florent

http://www.lafabrie.net/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'm going to take a little break this week and not talk about the election or registering to vote. If you haven't made up your mind to do so by now, I've got very little hope of convincing you of its value.

Today, I want to talk about stupid people. Yeah, I know.. I said I wasn't going to talk about the election. <G>

Seriously, this is the third time I've started this column tonight. I started off by actually talking about the elections and voting. Then I thought better of it and started rambling on about evolution and how our ability to modify our surroundings actually benefits less desirable traits and subdues the more desirable ones. MAJOR league boring.

But now, I find that I'm really out of things to ponder.... for the moment, anyway. So let's just say that I'm getting dumber and dumber along with a major portion of our population. <grin>

Let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

'Andrew' asks about the availability of the CT60:

"I wasn't paying attention and I missed my opportunity to buy a CT60. Is it pretty much impossible to get one now?"

Ronald Hall tells Andrew:

"I'm not sure Andrew. I'd send an e-mail to Rodolphe (go to his website for the address) and see.

I did that, had my name put on a waiting list. Apparently, someone who had signed up, failed to come through in a timely manner on payment so I got in. I just received mine about 2 weeks ago. Note that its the 50mhz model, not the 66mhz model. I think Rodolphe is having a hard time finding CPUs now.

Anyway, send an e-mail to him - you never know - you might get lucky - I did!"

Andrew tells Ronald:

"I actually did send off a mail to his address and didn't receive a response (although it's been only a few days--call me impatient!).

I notice he posts here, though. Rodolphe, if you're reading this, can you tell me the situation?

I figure if Rodolphe doesn't have any more, somebody will be selling one sometime anyway. Hey, limited supply... sounds like a good markup profit item."

Mark Duckworth adds:

"Rodolphe sometimes communicates in spurts. His time is limited and I heard he has some scheduling issues. Be patient, if he's not responding to you then hopefully he's not responding to other people or shipping out any CT60's from his secret stash. I know in my case, I'd rather him be working on VME to falcon bus adapter than answer emails. Maybe cracking away on a coldfire mobo design."

Mike Freeman tells Andrew:

"You could contact Rodolphe, but I wouldn't get my hopes too high. Last I heard, they were all spoken for, plus a few people on a waiting list in case the spoken-for ones weren't purchased. I luckily just got mine in the mail, though! (not to rub it in or anything...)"

Anthony Page posts this question about an old favorite game of mine:

"One of my favorite games when I was a kid was Starglider 2, I loved the way you could fly to all the planets in the solar system and visit all

the different planets and see their atmospheres. I was just watching the BBC documentary called "The Planets" I downloaded from www.supernova.org. And I was amazed by the computer graphics they used to show each planet and what their atmospheres looked like. It really made me want to play something like Starglider again but with updated graphics and utilizing our scientific knowledge of what these planets are like. Is their anything like that out there?"

Benoit Morrissette tells Anthony:

"http://celestia.sourceforge.net/

Not exactly like SGII but interesting...
Have a good night!"

Anthony tells Benoit:

"Ahh one of my favorite games as a kid was Haleys Project you had to navigate a spaceship through the solar system and land on different planets. Amazing game for it's time. But that was on the 8-bit atari. For the ST I would have to say Sundog is the greatest game of all time."

Ronald Hall now asks about MiNT:

"Eventually, I want to get back to using MINT, like I did before. I've not kept up at all <head bowed in shame>, but I want to relearn. Is there a simple (as simple as is possible, I should say) 1-2-3 guide for installing MINT now? I should have the horsepower now, with the CT60 running and I've got an 80 gig IDE drive so I've got the room. I ordered N.aes v2.0 from Woller systems but do not have it in yet.

If it helps, I've been running Mandrake Linux since v7.0, so I'm somewhat familiar with Linux systems. (we don't do Windows in this household)."

'Coda' tells Ronald:

"...Install easymint. Go here:
http://atari.st-katharina-apotheke.de/home.php?lang=en&headline=EasyMiNT&texte=easymint

Get the Tar's you want (I got everything except the X11 package),LST.ZIP, EM_152.zip, and English.zip. Extract the easymint package and the LST.ZIP, and put the TARS and the .LST files in the /easymint/pakete folder. Use HDDriver or similar to make yourself a partition for MiNT (put aside a gig or two of that 80 ;-)) and give it a LNX partition ID. Then run easymint.prg and it will install everything for you. It will reboot into MiNT and you will have to restart the installer (it remembers where it was) to install the RPM's. When its done it may boot MiNT and go straight to the desktop. >From here you will probably want to install NAES and Thing. Configuring XAAES/NAES and installing a new desktop is another topic. I'll let someone more experienced fill you in. (I managed it but it was a PITA)."

Ronald asks Coda:

"What games...? Perhaps you can use something like WineX/Cedega? We've had lots of luck with games like Starcraft, Jedi Academy, Doom3, Diablo2,and Knights of the old Republic here, under Linux."

Mark Duckworth tells Ronald:

"You know, your linux experience translates directly over to Freemint. You'll enjoy yourself!"

Ronald tells Mark:

"When I had MINT installed before, on my Nemesis equipped Falcon, I thought it was a blast. In fact, MINT was actually what got me started on Mandrake Linux. It only seems right somehow that I have come full-circle.

I'm trying to remember what it was called that I used? KGMD? Or something like that. Can't remember honestly. It started from a floppy though. I used docs by K.Ellis (Karen?). Whatever became of her? At one time she was a very strong MINT/Atari advocate."

Greg Goodwin corrects Ronald:

"Katherine, I believe. She seems to have disappeared without a trace. She hasn't posted here in years.

"When you say Linux, you mean PC linux, not Atari 68K linux right?"

Ronald tells Greg:

"Yes, I meant Mandrake Linux v9.2, running on an Athlon XP2100, 512megs Ram, Nvidia Geforce 4/Ti4600 video card, blah, blah, blah."

Ronald now asks for help with a Falcon sound problem:

"I've suddenly lost all sound with my Falcon. I plugged the speaker setup into my Linux box, and it's working fine.

I've got no keyboard clicks, no sound from MODs (Bobtracker), or from any games.

I did have sound working fine before. The only thing I've added in the last couple of weeks is the CT60. I don't think thats the problem but its the only hardware mod that I've done. I had not played anything with sound under the CT60. This is the first time.

Any ideas where to start?"

Sam F. tells Ronald:

"I also have sound problems, but they occurred before the CT60. Of course, after the addition of the CT60, I get a blank white screen more often then not, and no activity from my drives."

Ronald adds:

"I pulled the CT60 and I got all sound back. Anyone have any ideas about this?

I'm in the middle of gluing the heatsink to the CPU and once it dries, I'll re-install the CT60 and see if I lose sound again."

'Chris' tells Ronald:

"There is a week ground track on the audio plugs on the falcon, it could be blown, though I don't know about this relating to your CT60 problems."

Ronald replies:

"Hmm, don't think its that. I hooked the CT60 back up, and lost all sound again. It works with the CT60 removed.

For some odd reason, the CT60 kills all sound on my Falcon."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Half Life 2 in November!
Boiling Point: Road to Hell!
Screen Sizzlers!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

'Half-Life 2' Release Set for November After Delay

Vivendi Universal Games said on Tuesday it plans to ship "Half-Life 2" to retailers in November, bringing to market the eagerly anticipated PC game that has been plagued by missed launch dates and a hacker attack on its

development company.

Vivendi said it plans to have "Half-Life 2," the sequel to one of the best-selling video games ever, on shelves on Nov. 16 in time for the crucial holiday season that is the biggest sales period for video game makers and toy companies.

The game is considered so important to the industry that at one point its delay last year helped prompt analysts to lower their PC game growth forecasts.

"HL2" was also seen as key to hardware companies like PC graphics chip makers ATI Technologies Inc. and Nvidia Corp., who count on video game players to consistently buy the newest, fastest and most-expensive chips to play intensive games like "HL2."

The game had been set for a Sept. 30 release last year, but the week before that date, its developer Valve Software said "HL2" would not launch on schedule. Instead it was scheduled for release at some unspecified point that holiday season.

Subsequently, Valve said some of the game’s code had been stolen by hackers that infiltrated the company’s e-mail systems. Bits of that code appeared on the Internet, as did what some fans said in online forums were playable portions of the game.

The original "Half-Life," released in 1998, is still popular among PC gamers, and a modified version of the game, called "Counter-Strike," is widely used in gaming competitions.

"Half-Life 2" stars Gordon Freeman, a scientist battling aliens from the planet Xen in a mysterious European locale known only as City 17.

Atari Announces Boiling Point: Road to Hell

Atari, Inc. will bring Boiling Point: Road to Hell, a new first-person action game featuring a massive open-ended game world, to the personal computer in Spring 2005. Boiling Point: Road to Hell will combine intense armed combat with exploration and interaction with a vast and seamless open-ended gaming world. Boiling Point: Road to Hell is in development by Ukrainian developer Deep Shadows and is scheduled for release in Spring 2005.

"Boiling Point: Road to Hell will push the boundaries of what people think first-person action games can do, with its unbelievable scale of the game world and the ability to choose your own path," said Wim Stocks, Executive Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Atari. "Working with Deep Shadows is really exciting - they bring a fresh look and innovative ideas to a genre that needs new avenues for exploration."

In Boiling Point: Road to Hell, gamers will travel to the present day jungles of South America and battle competing factions in a brutal guerrilla war. Developer Deep Shadows’ innovative game engine streams the beautifully rendered environment, creating a non-linear gameplay experience, with no loading times or separate levels, creating a continuous world spanning hundreds of miles. To make the most of the environment, a massive range of vehicles will be at the disposal of the player, as well as

a vast array of weapons.

The wide open game world features an array of different AI factions with which the player can interact, and hundreds of diverse missions to create an original experience each time the game is played. Combined with the vast seamless gaming world, the result is gameplay freedom and replayability on an unprecedented scale.

Boiling Point: Road to Hell is scheduled for release on personal computer in spring 2005.

Screen Sizzlers

The bikini-clad coed draws a blank on the first question: "Which king in a deck of cards has no mustache?"

Clueless, she adjusts her skimpy top and says, "Spades?"

"Wrong!" shouts the game host, comedian Matt Sadler.

Knowing what’s coming next, the college guys grunt and hoot and the babes scream "wooo!" For missing the question, the happy coed must pull her top down.

Topless babes are the payoff in "The Guy Game," a new trivia video game whose raunchy banter and racy content falls somewhere between barely decent and indecently bare.

To win, players must answer trivia questions correctly and guess whether busty coeds will. The more right answers, the less the digital "knocker blockers" obscure the nudity. By the end, it’s topless rope jumping and sack races.

Get ready for video games gone wild this fall: Several mainstream game publishers are releasing bawdy games containing nudity and explicit sexual content. "The Guy Game" and "Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude" are already out. An adults-only "Singles: Flirt Up Your Life" is being sold online, with a toned-down M-rated version on the way. November will bring "Playboy: The Mansion" and "Rumble Roses," the first all-women’s-wrestling game, featuring unquestionably dirty moves.

These are the raciest games ever made for the mainstream market, their graphic graphics setting a precedent for a whole new sexual dimension. Some experts say it’s the next evolution in the industry, one that - combining the two hottest forms of entertainment today, video games and sex - could expand the focus of the "M" rating from bad language and violence to prurience.

Why now? Because the first gaming generation has grown up. The $7 billion-a-year video game industry now caters to players whose average age is 29, not the nerdy teen stereotype, according to the Entertainment Software Association. Yet 85 percent of all games sold in 2003 were rated "E" for everyone or "T" for teen.

"It would be naive to think, given that market," says ESA President Douglas Lowenstein, "that forevermore video gaming would be a completely pure and chaste field."

Leading the pack since its August release is "The Guy Game," which one reviewer called " 'You Don't Know Jack' with boobs," referring to the popular trivia video game series. Jeff Spangenberg, CEO of TopHeavy Studios, makers of "The Guy Game," says reviews have been mixed and message boards and blogs have been buzzing.

"Some people see the game for what it is, which is a game geared toward guys about things guys like - competing against your buddies, showing up your buddies and topless nudity," he says. "But other people were just so offended that there is sex in a video game and they could not get over that."

Spangenberg founded TopHeavy Studios two years ago to focus on innovative game ideas and "The Guy Game" is its first release. He says the game stands out for showing video nudity rather than animation. "It's a new concept," he says, "and I'm sure when the movie industry first had topless nudity, a lot of people couldn't believe it."

He wouldn't provide figures but says the game is selling well.

Enough to foretell a trend? Heck, this season even "Pro Fishing Challenge" lets you customize your angler into a perky chick wearing a skimpy two-piece, and "Outlaw Golf 2" hits the links loaded with sexual innuendo, lewd characters and peekaboo pixels.

Konami's "Rumble Roses" was inspired by the Miller Lite beer TV ad last year in which two scantily clad women wrestled in a fountain. Contestants strip down to tiny bikini tops and thongs. In the mud-wrestling mode, their skimpy attire at times appears to disappear. Says product manager Rob Goff: "With Rumble Rose, sure there are great visuals and really sexy models, but at the core of it is a great game."

If the topic is naked, you can bet Playboy isn't far from the action. Coming to a video-game store near you is "Playboy: The Mansion" - a chance for players to be Hugh Hefner and build the Playboy empire. An M-rated takeoff on the popular company-building game "Tycoon," the game's hardly all business: Around practically every corner is a bevy of bunnies. The game play is digitally animated, but success unlocks a bonus archive of photos of actual Playmates.

"This is not a game so you can see dirty pictures - you can use the Internet for that," says Joe Minton, president of "Playboy: The Mansion" publisher Cyberlore Studios, whose other titles include "Risk: Global Domination" and the futuristic MechWarrior series. "It's a really cool game. It's like seeing an R-rated movie that's a really good movie." (And, sure, you buy Playboy to read the articles.)

The game, along with several other sexual-content titles, got a publicity goose from October's Playboy magazine: Video gaming's most come-hither vixens were featured in a five-page nude pictorial called "Gaming Grows Up." Pinups for the PlayStation population - "an attempt to say the gaming market is maturing," says Playboy senior editor Scott Alexander.

Among those showing off their digital assets is "Leisure Suit Larry's" Luba Licious, a hottie he's after, and BloodRayne, the half-vampire half-vamp of the action series of the same name.

"She's coy and there is definite innuendo, but there's no rampant sex or nudity in the game and I don't anticipate her ever getting naked there,"

says Ken Gold, vice president of marketing at Majesco, maker of "BloodRayne 2," released Oct. 12.

Sex in video games isn't altogether new. Game designers made a few adult titles before ESRB ratings began labeling content in 1994. The original late-'80s "Leisure Suit Larry" was a floppy disk of campy shenanigans in which disco loser Larry tries to seduce overly endowed women. The cartoony sex-scene graphics were cheesy, the humor doofy. And it developed a following.

Since then, bikini-clad babes and slutty prostitutes have popped up in various games. But last year's "BMX XXX" took the cheesecake, rewarding players for completing bike stunts with video clips of topless strippers.

Many stores wouldn't stock it. Its maker, Acclaim, filed for bankruptcy in August - though "BMX XXX" didn't single-handedly bring it down. But if reviewers dismissed its nudity as gratuitous, this year's games are getting a more serious look.

Last month Eidos, maker of the Tomb Raider series, released the adult-only "Singles: Flirt Up Your Life" online. Simply, it's like the popular life-simulation game "The Sims" but with full-frontal nudity (both genders) and no-sheets sex.

But Eidos's producer, Tom Marx, says it's much more than that, calling the game a 3-D relationship simulator that goes as far as the player's relationship skills take it. "You actually have to work at it and build up the relationship with a complete stranger and eventually you may get lucky," says Marx, adding that the game targets 18-and-older players, men and women.

And not just men and women together, he adds. "If you want to bring two ladies together or two guys, knock yourself out, you can do that. . . . 'Singles' should cross many lines, men, women, gay, straight and everything in between."

Probably none of the new games qualifies as pornography, but most would garner an "R" rating in the movies - even the animated games like "Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude," released Oct. 5. Now Larry's chasing college coeds.

"It's simply a very irreverent, almost sophomoric game," says Phil O'Neil, president of Vivendi Universal Games North America, a video-game giant whose titles range from kid stuff such as the Crash Bandicoot series to the sci-fi action-adventure "Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay."

This is the company's first venture into sexual content, and O'Neil seems reserved at grouping "Leisure Suit Larry" among the new racy games, comparing it instead to the films "American Pie" and "Scary Movie."

"We thought this would resonate with today's gaming audience," he says. "Now we have guys who were 'x' age 10 years ago who think this stuff is pretty funny."

But Vivendi Universal passed on the opportunity to publish "The Guy Game." O'Neil says "it was a little more gratuitous and provocative than we were interested in doing."

Explicit content can make for marketing headaches, including getting approval from the three big console makers - Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo

- who have final say on which disks spin on their systems.

Majesco’s Gold says many publishers are hesitant to make sexual-content titles because they would have a limited distribution base beyond video-game stores and the Internet. "You know it is not getting into Wal-Mart and Target," he says.

And some critics fear that video gaming’s naked ambition will take Pong to porn. "Video-game makers move into the pornography realm because there is money to be made," says Ann Simonton, co-founder of Media Watch, a national nonprofit women’s organization that has lobbied against violence and sexism in video games.

"The characters in ’Leisure Suit Larry,’ they look extraordinarily young with the gigantic breasts - kind of an ideal fantasy of the 12-year-old," she says. "This has enormous impact on a culture where we can’t seem to teach sex education along with the joy of emotional connection and intimacy. It’s all about looking at girls as objects."

Patti Miller, director of the Children’s Media Program at Children Now, an advocacy group, is concerned about the effects on girls’ self image and boys’ attitudes toward females.

"This sends a troubling message about the role of girls and women in their lives," she says, "that young women and girls are valued for how they look, their bodies often portrayed as sexual objects."

But game maker Steven Manschot says sexual content tends to attract attention disproportional to its impact.

"I don’t think sexual content is gaining ground. From a global standpoint there is still a large taboo," says Manschot, the Netherlands-based creator of LoveChess, a downloadable game whose richly endowed graphics and eye-opening animations turn the traditional intellectual game on its head. When these chess pieces, naked Greek and Trojan gods and goddesses, jump each other, they jump each other sexually.

Concerned parents rummaging through their teenagers’ video game piles can breathe easy, says ESA’s Lowenstein.

"There are close to 1,000 games for a console and PC that come out every year and you are still looking at a very, very small number that are probing this area," he says, adding that M ratings and descriptions, along with parental guidance, can keep sexual-content games out of the wrong hands.

"I don’t think there is any question there are some games that are pushing the envelope when it comes to sexual content," he says. "But it remains to be seen how successful those games will be. In the end, it is still all about the quality of the game."

Virtual Ads Translate Into Real Revenue

Roar down city streets in the upcoming "Need for Speed Underground 2" racing game and you’ll see a Best Buy store amid the skyscrapers along with bright billboards hawking Cingular Wireless, Old Spice, and Burger King.

A virtual billboard advertising Cingular Wireless service finds its way into "Need for Speed Underground 2."

The fictional landscapes of video games are increasingly being dotted with product placements, pitching everything from athletic shoes to movies. And that's not all advertisers will soon be able to update the ads over the Internet whenever they want, long after the games are sold.

The plugs reflect a growing business reality video games are stealing eyeballs from movies and television, where product placement has long been a staple.

TV viewership among men aged 18 to 34 declined by about 12% last year while that group spent 20% more time on games, according to Nielsen Media Research.

Video games now attract not just hard-core gamers, but people of all ages and more women than ever. In the United States, overall sales reached $10.7 billion last year more than movie box-office receipts and is expected to reach nearly $16.9 billion in 2008, according to market research firm DFC Intelligence.

Revenues from game advertising worldwide are following the migration from remote control to joystick, expected to grow from $200 million a year today to $1 billion in 2008, predicted DFC's president David Cole.

"If the audience is there, the advertiser will be there," said Anthony Noto, a media entertainment and Internet analyst at Goldman Sachs.

Case in point: The marketing budget for ads in video games at DaimlerChrysler AG's Chrysler Group was zero four years ago. Now it represents more than 10% of the division's overall marketing budget, planting Chryslers, Jeeps and Dodge cars in more than a dozen video games while spending on television and print ads has dropped.

"When I was a kid, I used to run downstairs to watch Saturday morning cartoons, but my sons wake up and run downstairs to play video games," said Jeff Bell, a Chrysler Group vice president.

In its first experiment, the automaker invested six figures a few years ago so players of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 game would have to do rail stunts over a Jeep to get points, or go through game levels decorated with Jeep billboards.

Judging the amount of eyeball time Jeep got from that investment was just a rough calculation. In the upcoming Tony Hawk's Underground 2 game, Jeep hopes to get a better measurement: players who want game upgrades will have to go to Jeep's Web site to download them.

On Monday, Massive Inc. will launch what is believed to be a first-of-its-kind video game advertising network, allowing marketers to deliver new ads into console and PC games via an online connection.

Billboards in a subway scene could feature a new movie trailer one day and the hottest new energy drink the next. Promotions could be tailored to geography, so that players in New York and California might see different versions of a car ad.

Massive's service can also track the viewing time each ad gets a key metric that advertisers traditionally rely on in paying for television

spots.

In the past, the value of product placements in video games were difficult to gauge, based on predictions of how many units would sell and how often the ads would be viewed by players. Deals were cut somewhat randomly between game publishers and advertisers, many ending in cross-promotional, no-cash transactions while others would cost advertisers anywhere from three-digit to seven-digit figures.

"It’s been like the wild wild West up until this point," said Jay Cohen, a vice president at game publisher Ubisoft Entertainment Inc. "But now it’s coming to a critical mass advertisers keep coming to us saying, ’We want in. How much is it going to cost?’ Without those (advertising) metrics, we can’t go about it successfully or fairly."

That’s why Ubisoft plans to use Massive’s technology in the next sequel of the popular Tom Clancy Splinter Cell series, due out in March.

Capitalizing on the same advertising trend, Nielsen Entertainment is working with game publisher Activision Inc. to start a game-rating service similar to its existing TV-ratings system.

"It’s a natural progression for the gaming industry to create standardized metrics to help everybody know the value of ads in games," said Matt Tatham, a Nielsen Entertainment spokesman.

In-game advertising has gained momentum in the past two years because traditional television and print ads are becoming less effective, said Wim Stocks, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Atari Inc., a game company that recently doubled to four its staff that handles product placements.

Advertising now shows up everywhere, most notably in blockbuster titles. There’s a Samsung cell phone in "Enter the Matrix," a Palm PDA in "Splinter Cell," and Old Spice sponsors the halftime show in "NCAA Football 2005."

Electronics Arts Inc., the world’s largest video game publisher, says its ad revenues are up 60% this year.

Mitchell Davis, chief executive at Massive, developed the concept for real-time advertising in games more than two years ago after playing Grand Theft Auto. "It was all fake advertising in the game, and I thought, ’It should be real.’" If Massive’s technology and service works as promised, Ubisoft and other game makers say in-game ads will inevitably mushroom and become a standard marketing method.

Next year, Vivendi Universal Games plans to introduce four games using Massive’s advertising service.

"This will be woven into every major game company’s plans moving forward, but it’s really only going to work in games where it makes sense," said Ed Zobrist, vice president of global marketing at Vivendi.

His company has turned away advertisers in the past alcohol companies that wanted to be in the new Leisure Suit Larry game, and shoe companies that wanted fantasy characters to wear their treads.

"Real world brands just do not have a place in a fantasy game," Zobrist said.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Atari Video Club Officially Opens News Stand

For Immediate Release
October 18th, 2004

The Atari Video Club is proud to announce The Grand Opening of the AVC News Stand. Dan Iacovelli, AVC/JCU Chairperson, started opening the news stand back in June of 2004 with the Final Jagfest issue, and later added the other 6 six Jagfest issues to the news stand every 10th day.

The news stand is actually a reworked version of the old back issue pages from AVC online the clubs website (which is still accessible but only through the news stand).

The News Stand has images from the covers from the issues as well as full descriptions of the issues, plus an extra feature to the news stand is that fest issues are not only available in normal print versions (as they have been in the past) as well as in PDF form but will also be available at cafepress.com.

Currently as of this writing only the Jagfest issues are listed on the news stand as well as the programs from our computer and video game trade show The Video Game Summit (the programs are only available thru Cafepress.com (the 2004 program is currently at the VGS shop at cafepress.com (http://www.cafepress.com/VGS) while the 2003 program is listed at AVC news stand at cafepress.com (http://www.cafepress.com/avcnews) (this is where all the jagfest issues are at as well)).

AVC also announces plans for a new magazine only to be available thru cafepress.com To be entitled "Into The Zone". This magazine is actually a combination of 2 regular Atari Zone issues (Regular issues are usually 12 pages long). Regular Atari Zone issues will still be available in normal print and PDF forms) The first set of "Into The Zone" issues will actually come from the back issues of the Atari Zone (while there are a few back issues that are more 12 pages long they won’t be combined but will still be called "Into The Zone" for the cafepress edition (the normal version will be called "the Atari Zone").

"Into The Zone" is most likely to debut some time early next year (it won’t be available by subscription though but the Atari zone issues will still be). The AVC News Stand can be viewed by going to AVC Online (http://avc.atari-users.net) and clicking on the button that will take you to news stand site.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Google's New PC Search Tool Poses Risks

People who use public or workplace computers for e-mail, instant messaging and Web searching have a new privacy risk to worry about: Google's free new tool that indexes a PC's contents for quickly locating data.

If it's installed on computers at libraries and Internet cafes, users could unwittingly allow people who follow them on the PCs, for example, to see sensitive information in e-mails they've exchanged. That could mean revealed passwords, conversations with doctors, or viewed Web pages detailing online purchases.

"It's clearly a very powerful tool for locating information on the computer," said Richard M. Smith, a privacy and security consultant in Cambridge, Mass. "On the flip side of things, it's a perfect spy program."

Google Desktop Search, publicly released Thursday in a "beta" test phase for computers running the latest Windows operating systems, automatically records e-mail you read through Outlook, Outlook Express or the Internet Explorer browser. It also saves copies of Web pages you view through IE and chat conversations using America Online Inc.'s instant-messaging software. And it finds Word, Excel and PowerPoint files stored on the computer.

If you're the computer's only user, the software is helpful "as a photographic memory of everything you've seen on the computer," said Marissa Mayer, director of consumer Web products at Google Inc.

The giant index remains on the computer and isn't shared with Google. The company can't access it remotely even if it gets a subpoena ordering it to do so, Mayer said.

Where the privacy and security concerns arise is when the computer is shared.

Type in "hotmail.com" and you'll get copies, or stored caches, of messages that previous users have seen. Enter an e-mail address and you can read all the messages sent to and from that address. Type "password" and get password reminders that were sent back via e-mail.

Acknowledging the concerns, Mayer said managers of shared computers should think twice about installing the software until Google develops advanced features like password protection and multi-user support.

In the meantime, users of shared PCs can look for telltale signs.

A multicolored swirl in the system tray at the lower right corner of the computer desktop means the software is running. A user can right-click on that to exit the program - thereby preventing it from recording Web

surfing, e-mail and chat sessions.

Users can also surf on non-IE browsers like Opera and Mozilla, although the software may index Web pages already stored before the software gets installed.

Managers of public access terminals can also install software or deny users administrative privileges so they can't install unauthorized programs, such as Google's. In fact, many libraries and cybercafes already do so.

Herb Jones, owner of Herb's Cyber Cafe in Oblong, Ill., tried out the desktop search program on his computer and likes it - but he won't install it on his two public terminals. In fact, he's written software to prevent customers from installing programs like it.

"Otherwise, they can put on their own files if they want, a worm, a virus, anything, and you're shut down," Jones said.

The FedEx Kinko's chain is also taking preventive measures. It's deploying software designed to automatically refresh its public access terminals to a virgin state for each new customer. So any errant software would disappear, as would any personal settings, files or Web caches, said Maggie Thill, a spokeswoman with FedEx Kinko's.

But policies do vary, and no precaution is foolproof, warned Carol Brey-Casiano, president of the American Library Association and director of public libraries in El Paso, Texas.

"We do our best to protect our patrons and computers and network, but as you can imagine, thousands of people can use public computers in a given week," she said.

The new Google tool would not only aid people in spying on past patrons on public PCs. At home, users could record their kids' instant messaging conversations or view a spouse's e-mail. In the office, employers could index what their workers are up to.

If each user has a separate logon to Windows, Google Desktop Search will be stymied, however. That's because only one person can install and use the software on a given computer.

The power of Google's software relies on centralizing what's already saved on computers; most browsers, for instance, have a built-in cache that keeps copies of Web pages recently visited. The difference is that Google's index is permanent, though users can delete items individually. And the software makes all the items easier to find.

The software can also betray users, said Annalee Newitz, policy analyst at the Electronic Frontier Foundation. Delete an e-mail or file, yet a copy remains on Google's index.

Neel Mehta, leader of the X-Force research and development team at Internet Security Systems Inc., said the threats are real, though there are plenty of other products available for spying - ones better at doing the recording secretly.

"It's not designed to be an illicitous tool," Mehta said of the Google software. "It's designed to be a search engine."

Worldwide Phishing Attacks May Stem from Few Sources

Research from an e-mail security provider suggests that a handful of people are responsible for the vast majority of the phishing attacks on the Internet and the perpetrators are using a rotating series of zombie networks to launch them.

Researchers at CipherTrust Inc. analyzed more than four million e-mails collected from the company's customers during the first two weeks of October and found that nearly a third of all of the zombie machines sending the phishing messages are based in the United States. That's twice as many as the 16 percent that are found in South Korea.

However, these findings do not mean that these attacks are originating from inside these countries. The global nature of the Internet allows attackers anywhere in the world to compromise machines in any location. In fact, many experts believe that the majority of phishers are in some way connected to organized crime groups in Russia or Eastern Europe and that most such attacks begin there.

New measures against phishing attacks may be gaining traction.

The most surprising conclusion of the research is that the attackers sending out the phishing messages are using zombie networks of only about 1,000 PCs.

"That's a pretty small bot network for the volume of stuff that these guys are doing," said Dmitri Alperovitch, the research engineer at Atlanta-based CipherTrust Inc. who conducted the study. "But the trick is that they rotate to a different set of compromised machines each day. They don't keep going to the same ones each time."

Crackers for years have been accumulating large networks of machines compromised with small programs that give them the ability to control the PCs remotely. They routinely sell or trade access to the networks to others in the cracker underground and the PCs typically are used either for launching DDoS (distributed denial of service attacks).

Click here to read about how to identify phishing attacks and fight back.

But as authorities began cracking down on spammers in recent years, the spammers have begun relying on these networks to send out their messages, too. Now, phishers have gotten into the game.

Alperovitch said that there are fewer than five operators in control of the zombie networks that he identified in his research. And, even though they're generating thousands of fraudulent e-mails every day, their output was still a tiny fraction-less than one percent - of the four million messages CipherTrust examined.

Phishers seem to be concentrating their efforts on a few high-profile targets, as well. In the sample CipherTrust looked at, 54 percent of the phishing messages used CitiGroup's Citibank name to entice recipients. Another 13 percent use Citigroup Global Markets Inc.'s Smith Barney's brand and eBay Inc. is the victim in about four percent of the scams.

Apple Enhances iBook, Cuts Prices Before Holidays

Apple Computer Inc. on Tuesday announced a faster version of its popular iBook notebook personal computer and a less expensive model of its PowerMac desktop line, as the computer maker gears up for the holiday shopping season.

Cupertino, California-based Apple said its 12-inch and 14-inch iBooks can now be ordered with its PowerPC G4 processor running at up to 1.33 gigahertz, a measure of how fast a chip performs. It also cut prices across the line.

The new lower-end iBook model has a 1.2 gigahertz microprocessor, a combination drive that can play DVDs and burn compact discs, has a 12-inch screen and costs $999, which is $100 less than the previous low-end model.

Apple also added wireless networking, using the 802.11g standard, to its full line of iBook PCs, the company said. Depending on features and functions, the beefed-up iBook line ranges in cost from $999 to $1,499.

Apple, which makes the iPod digital music player, also added a less expensive, single-processor model of its Power Mac desktop personal computer. The 1.8 gigahertz Power Mac costs $1,499, Apple said.

The Power Mac, Apple’s high-end line, is aimed at graphics, video and music professionals. With the exception of the single-processor model just introduced, the Power Mac features dual PowerPC G5 processors.

Apple also, on Monday, e-mailed to reporters an invitation saying, "Steve Jobs, Bono and The Edge invite you to attend a special event" on Oct. 26. Bono and The Edge are lead singer and lead guitarist, respectively, for Irish rock group U2, who are featured in iPod television ads.

Speculation in recent weeks on Apple rumor Web sites has mounted that Apple is on the verge of introducing a larger capacity, 60-gigabyte iPod with a color screen and that will display photos, which analysts have said makes sense.

eDonkey Kicks Kazaa Out of No. 1 Spot

Kazaa seems to have lost its title as most popular file-sharing software, according to online tracking firm BayTSP.

In a recent report, BayTSP noted that users are gravitating toward the eDonkey/Overnet network instead of Kazaa. The latter network has grown in popularity since 2001, when Napster was shuttered.

Every month, BayTSP looks at the daily average of file-swappers on the FastTrack peer-to-peer network, which includes Kazaa and similar programs.

During September, eDonkey averaged 2.54 million users, while Kazaa averaged 2.48 million users. This is the first time Kazaa has been unseated since BayTSP began monitoring file-sharing networks 18 months ago.

While eDonkey appears to be king of the file-swapping hill, BayTSP does note that the firm’s monitoring does not encompass all file-sharing

networks.

It also observes that some bogus users, often thought to be entertainment company representatives, flood Kazaa with spoofed files in an attempt to discourage file-sharing and piracy. These files can include fake songs or corrupted files.

"One caveat is that an unknown number of users on each network is made up of interdiction companies offering spoofed files," notes the BayTSP report.

File-sharing networks have seen a great deal of interest since Napster began offering ways for music lovers to swap songs in their collections.

But, as the technology is refined, it is not just tunes that are being traded. BayTSP also tracks films that are swapped via the networks.

The increase in these files also is reflected in its user statistics, BayTSP says. The average number of files per user has dropped, according to BayTSP, indicating that the networks are being flooded with larger files typically associated with movies and software.

Even if it is not visited as frequently as eDonkey, Kazaa continues to be a target for lawsuits by the recording and film industries due to its popularity.

The aggressiveness of anti-P2P efforts is likely to increase in the future, no matter which site is drawing more visitors, said Jim Brelsford, head of technology law at Jones Day

"As the recording industry, in particular, goes after end-users, there will be shakeups in peer-to-peer and file-sharing," Brelsford told NewsFactor.

Virtual Vote Lets Non-Americans Pick President

Even non-Americans can cast a vote in the upcoming U.S. presidential election thanks to a Web site tracking world opinion on the race for the White House.

Surfers clicking on www.globalvote2004.org can tick a virtual ballot for President Bush, Democratic challenger John Kerry, or one of five other candidates fighting to win the real vote on November 2.

Voters are asked to register which country they’re from, creating a non-official tally of who the rest of the world would choose to lead the planet’s most powerful country.

"It’s fun and obviously not constitutionally approved, but it is a serious vote because the U.S. has power over all our lives and the election will affect the world," Ben Carey, one of the site’s creators, told Reuters on Wednesday.

"The votes are coming in from everywhere, from places like Armenia, Turkmenistan and Venezuela, and if we have a sizable number we’ll release the results 48 hours before the real election," he said.

Besides Bush and Kerry, who are neck and neck according to the latest Reuters poll, voters can choose one of the other candidates, including

Ralph Nader of the Reform Party and Michael Peroutka of the Constitution Party.

Carey, a British author, said the London-based Web site is non-partisan and is not sponsored by any political party.

Microsoft, Swatch Offer New Wireless Watches

Microsoft Corp. and watch maker Swatch are offering a new line of wireless data watches, the companies said on Wednesday, bringing the era of Dick Tracy wristwatch radios one step closer.

The watches offer news, sports, weather and stock quotes, among other snippets of content, via Microsoft’s MSN Direct wireless data service. Twice the number of information channels of earlier Microsoft-based models are available.

Known as the "Paparazzi" line, the computerized Swatches also offer local entertainment updates through a deal with publisher Time Out, as well as a chance to meet celebrities.

The watches come with three levels of service. Each comes free with local weather, news headlines and stock index levels. For $40 a year, users can receive more weather data, personalized news and sports scores, stock quotes, horoscopes and the like. For $60 annually, they can receive instant messages and calendar reminders from their PC if they use Microsoft Outlook software.

Microsoft and Swatch began work on watches three years ago.

"This is a new way of getting information," Bill Gates, Microsoft’s chairman and chief software architect, told a news conference.

"It’s glanceable information and it’s a combination of the two things that I think people really care about - fashion, something that’s fun and exiting, and technology that brings them personal information," he said.

Paparazzis retail for $150, or two to three times the cost of conventional watches sold by the Swiss watch maker.

With the addition of Swatch, there will now be 12 Microsoft "wrist-top" watch models on sale for the holiday season. The first such watches were introduced at the start of this year.

Other manufacturers include the youth-oriented watch maker Fossil, Finnish sports gear maker Suunto and luxury brand Tissot, another Swatch Group brand.

The existing watches range in price from $129 for a Fossil to $725 for a Tissot. All of the watches are bulky and masculine, a function of the need to embed a wireless antenna in the watch body or wristband.

The watches utilize unused local FM radio channels to broadcast general content as well as personalized scheduling information to watches. Messages can also be delivered to the watches using Microsoft Messenger instant-messaging software.

True two-way phone features like those used by Tracy, the iconic U.S. cartoon detective, would require stronger batteries and smaller chips than are now economical.

Newer models of the Microsoft watches are thinner and more stylish than the first versions of the computerized watches introduced a year ago. Microsoft has also overcome congestion problems that hampered wireless data delivery in the first few months of operation, a spokesman said.

The watches are sold only in the United States and Canada so far, although the parties are eyeing European markets.

Americans Using Online Reputation Systems

A quarter of online Americans have taken advantage of one of the Internet's true powers: the ability to let users collectively decide whether to trust a product, service or individual.

Such reputation systems are found on sites like eBay, where members rate fellow buyers and sellers, and Amazon.com, where customers review books and other items. Other sites are devoted to rating consumer products, movies and even schoolteachers.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 26 percent of adult Internet users have posted such a rating. More experienced and active users were more likely to have done so, as were men and younger adults.

"The more voices that are in the mix, ... the better off everybody is," said Lee Rainie, director of the Pew group. "There's more wisdom in groups than there are in individuals no matter how expert they are."

Rainie said online reputation systems let users exploit the two-way capabilities of the medium and help them "feel like they are contributing to other people's decisions."

The telephone-based survey of 1,399 Internet users was conducted May 14 to June 17 and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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